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ABSTRACT

Designed for use by elementary school teachers responsible for working with students whose writing test scores indicate a need for remediation, this guide has as its goal the improvement of students' writing skills on a day-to-day basis. The first part of the guide describes the composing process and defines the characteristics of an effective writing program, specifying factors, examples, and criteria for identification of those characteristics. The next part of the guide outlines the expectations for students writing in kindergarten through grade 3 and in grades 4 through 6. The remaining parts discuss (1) organizing the classroom for writing, (2) analyzing student writing as process and as product, and (3) using the student writing product analysis sheet. A description and a sample of the analysis sheet are provided as well as analyses of sample student responses. Two unanalyzed samples of student responses are also included for training purposes. (HOD)

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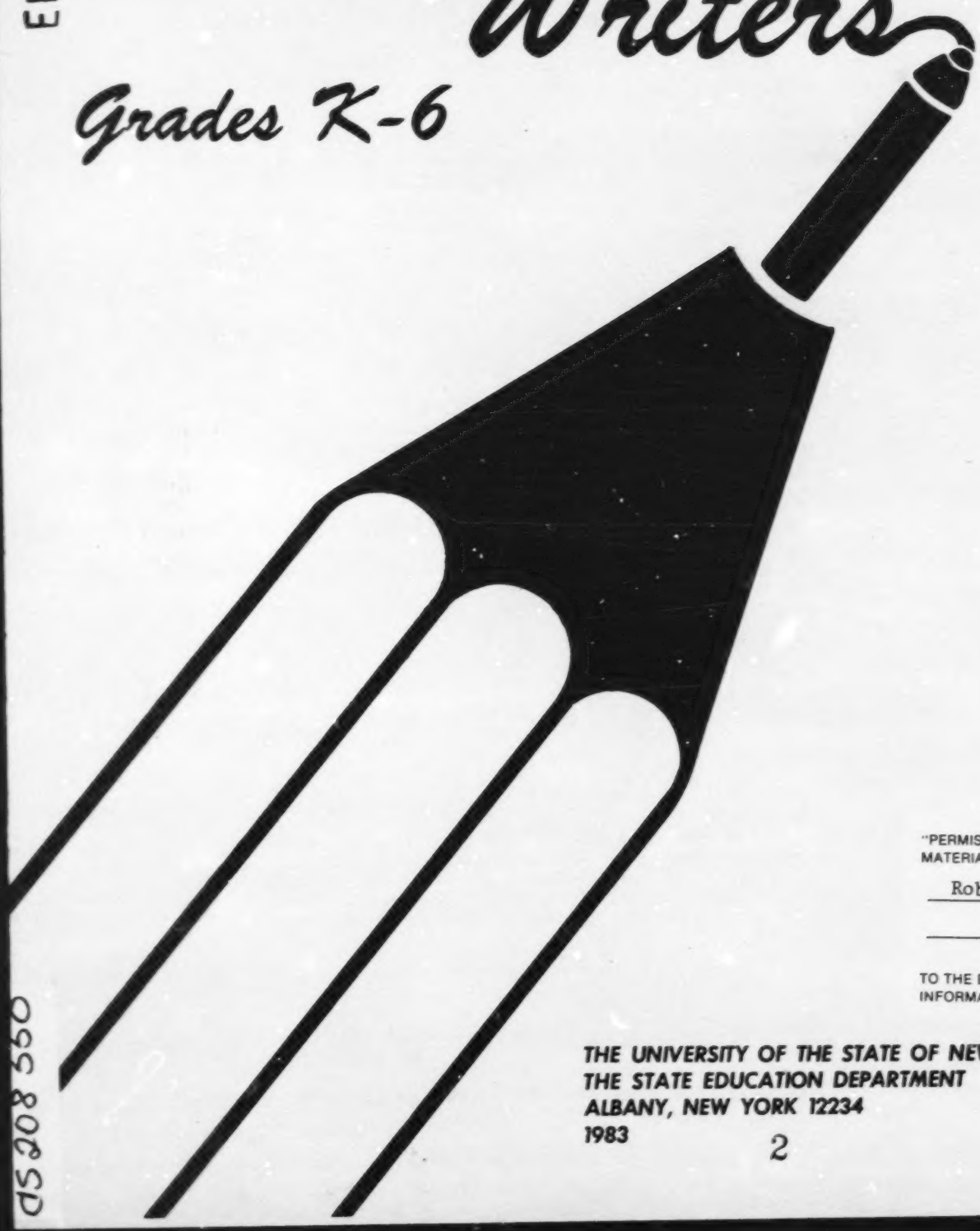
Helping Student Writers

Grades K-6



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CS208 550

Foreword

To be most effective, a school's instructional program in writing should begin with kindergarten and continue throughout all the grades so that all, or almost all, students will be competent writers by the time they reach grade 11. Unfortunately, the percentage of poor writers among high school, and even college, graduates is reported to be extremely high. A number of factors have contributed to this situation. In many cases, students have not been motivated to learn to write or been given the opportunity to do so in their school careers. Also, it is only in the last ten years or so that research into the composing process has provided guidance in the development of writing programs and the improvement of methods for teaching writing. Consequently, teachers have had little, if any, preservice or inservice training in the teaching of writing.

Beginning in the spring of 1983, a writing test was added to the Pupil Evaluation Program in order to assist schools in the early identification of students in need of special help in the development of their writing skills. This publication is designed especially for use by those teachers who are responsible for working with students whose scores on the Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools indicate a need for remediation. However, it should also be of value to all elementary school teachers in their development of a sound writing program that has as its goal the improvement of student writing skills on a day-to-day basis. In this way the focus of instruction becomes communicating clearly in writing rather than merely passing the grade 5 writing test.

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Contents

	PAGE
The Composing Process	1
An Effective Writing Program	4
Expectations for Student Writing	8
Level I (Grades K–3)	8
Level II (Grades 4–6)	10
Organizing the Classroom for Writing	12
Analyses of Student Writing	13
Analysis of a Student's Writing Process	13
Analysis of a Student's Writing Product	14
Using the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet	14
Description of the Analysis Sheet	14
Sample Analysis Sheet	15
Analyses of Sample Student Responses	19
Sample Student Responses for Analysis	38
Bibliography	43

The Composing Process

Although teachers' assignments and expectations for student writing are usually expressed in terms of a product—that is, a *whole piece of writing*—instruction must necessarily focus on the process of arriving at the finished piece. A whole piece of writing results from the selection, combination, arrangement, and development of ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and, often, longer units of discourse.* The complete composing process includes *prewriting, drafting, revising, editing,* and *publishing,* thus encompassing everything that goes on from the initial thinking about a topic through the publication of the completed product. Writers, including student writers, do not necessarily proceed in an orderly fashion from one stage of the process to the next. For example, many writers make revisions as they go along. Many times writers will need to gather more information or to generate more ideas in order to develop further a piece already in the drafting stage. For clarity, however, this discussion of the steps in the process will be sequential.

Not every writing activity involves the complete process. Just as adult writers may decide that a particular piece is not worth polishing, student writers need not bring every piece to the publication stage. Those pieces not brought through the complete process may be thought of as exploratory in nature. Some pieces may be written for the purpose of finding out what the writer thinks about a subject, to develop fluency, or for personal use. However, the teacher should require that a certain number of pieces be brought through the complete process.

Prewriting

Before students can write something worthwhile, they must be helped to realize that they already know and have experienced many things worth writing about. They should be made aware that they can draw on these experiences when writing. In addition, teachers should capitalize on classroom and school-related experiences as occasions for writing. Such school-related experiences might include:

- The arrival of new books or other materials
- A classroom visitor
- Fire drills
- A teacher retiring, getting married, or leaving
- Rules for a classroom activity
- The moving away of a classmate
- An unusual happening in the classroom
- Moods created by art, music, or plays
- Making puppets
- A classroom pet's behavior
- Stories or poems read to the students by the teacher
- Science experiments
- Social studies projects
- Role-playing and creative dramatics
- Field trips
- Films, film strips, slides

Other prewriting activities could include:

- Word games to develop vocabulary and fluency
- Modeling of a sentence pattern or a form to be used in the upcoming writing activity: for example, "The important thing about _____ is that it is _____," or a limerick form
- Teaching or reviewing a particular subskill important to the upcoming activity, such as the correct spelling of words needed to record a science observation

Of course, use of imagination should also be encouraged. Students can write riddles, short narratives, scripts, poems, fantasies, and fables. For such writing, prewriting activities might include:

- Reading representative samples to the class
- Oral storytelling or choral reading
- Discussion of the required elements of the form
- Role-playing
- Creative dramatics
- Oral word play: rhyming and alliteration

Students may gather information for a composition in ways other than personal experience. Examples of such ways are:

- Reading about a subject
- Observing an activity, place, or thing and taking notes
- Interviewing a number of people
- Listening to an oral presentation
- Viewing a TV documentary

Another way to help students generate and develop ideas is through peer conferences. For example, even very young students can be taught to interview each other in pairs or small groups. The interviewer asks prepared questions pertaining to a personal experience of the other student. The questions should deal with who, what, where, when, how to, and how many. The questions can be prepared by the teacher or generated by the class and should be specific to the particular writing task.

* Based on the definition of writing in "Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs," published by the National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL, March 1979.

Peer conferences can become less structured as students become more familiar with the technique. For example, the teacher may ask the students to jot down three to five topics that each might like to write about, and then to select the one that each feels most comfortable with at the particular time. Then the students ask each other questions, such as: How did you become interested in this topic? and What information or experience do you have that will help you write about it? Other questions can be spontaneous, stimulated by clues given in responses to previous questions.

After clarifying for themselves the purpose, audience, and task for writing a particular piece, students need to organize their ideas before beginning the first draft. They must be taught that the success of their purpose for writing greatly depends on the quality of organization of ideas which support that purpose.

Depending on their purpose and their own level of writing sophistication, students may organize their ideas in many ways. They may list events in chronological sequence, list them in order of importance, make columns showing comparison and contrast, put prewriting notes into columns for beginning, middle, and end, or make diagrams of main ideas and details. Rough outlines may also be helpful, but the teacher should avoid insisting on a formal outline in the writing process. Many younger students find that making a drawing before they write helps them organize their ideas.

Drafting

Students who are writing a first draft should be concerned mainly with developing the *content* for the particular purpose and audience. The correctness of mechanics during the writing of the first draft is secondary to the development of ideas. In this stage, students should focus on writing down their ideas. Students should be in a supportive environment in which they can feel free to consult the teacher, go back to earlier stages, look up information, but still not interrupt others whose ideas may be flowing more freely.

Of course, urging your students to "get it down" only works if they are also taught that a piece must go through revisions before it is finished. To facilitate later revisions, students may be taught to make a habit of:

- Skipping lines to allow for later additions and changes
- Circling any words they are not sure how to spell
- Placing an asterisk before any sentence they may wish to improve later
- Underlining words which they may wish to make more specific or for which they may wish to find a synonym

In the next draft, additions to content may be made, content reorganized, words made more specific, and sentences improved. Before publishing, spelling should be checked, as well as punctuation and capitalization.

Revising

In the books they read, young students see literature in its final form only. As a result, they are not aware of the long, perhaps even frustrating, hours an author devoted to the work. The page with the final product does not show all the scratch-outs and penciled-in revisions. Students do not see writing as a process; therefore, they believe that when they complete the first draft of their poem, story, or report, it is finished—it is the best they can do. Thus, it is important that the teacher show students that writing is a process and that the core of the process is revision.

For some students, the first step in revision is to learn that it is all right to "mess up" a first draft, to learn that information can be inserted or rearranged by drawing arrows indicating where it should be, and to learn that words may be crossed out or sentences rewritten.

To help students realize that revisions are necessary, the teacher could draft a composition with the class, using the chalkboard or an overhead projector. The teacher then revises the first draft, probably making some revisions during the actual drafting and others later. The teacher should point out the reasons for making each change and also perhaps accept suggestions from the students. The students thus have the opportunity to witness the process of revision and to realize that words do not magically flow to form a finished piece for an adult any more than they do for a student.

It is important for students to reread their own papers, even before looking at a checklist, to see what improvements they might like to make or what information they might need to add. Then, to help the students become more aware of what elements may need revision, the teacher should provide or post a preliminary checklist. The preliminary checklist could include basic considerations, such as:

- Is my message clear?
- Have I included enough information?
- Does my writing speak to the intended audience?
- Does my writing accomplish the purpose?

The students can apply the checklist to their own writing or work in small groups to discuss the application of the checklist to each other's writing. Teacher-student conferences are more helpful at this stage than they are after a piece has been turned in for an evalua-

tion or for a grade. It is pointless to work on mechanics and spelling before students have clearly understood the purpose, audience, task, and the necessity of developing appropriate content.

Editing

When the students have attended to the basic considerations in the first checklist, they can then address themselves to a second checklist dealing with whatever items of usage, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, or sentence structure the teacher feels are most appropriate to the task and the developmental level of the students.

An effective facilitator of editing is oral reading. When a student reads his or her work aloud, many problems, previously unnoticed, come to the surface. In oral reading, students must:

- Read papers *exactly* as they are written
- Listen attentively to themselves for natural pauses and stops, run-on sentences, omitted words, and awkward structure

Students may read their writing aloud to themselves, to a partner, or to a small group of peers. In the classroom itself, students have in their classmates a readily accessible audience to whom they can express their thoughts, feelings, and imagination as they read their writing. It is the role of the audience to listen attentively and to respond with their own thoughts and ideas to the thoughts and ideas they have heard expressed in the writing.

Finally, students should copy the writing in final draft form. The handwriting should be neat and legible, and the students should check to see that they have not made copying errors.

Teachers must allow time for writing as a process. Analysis takes time. Improvement takes time. The teacher and the students must accept this fact and not rely on proceeding from first to final draft in a single day. As revision-improvement is a cyclical process, a number of class periods may be needed for a final product to emerge.

Publishing

Part of the philosophy underlying the writing process is that students write to be read. The process stresses student awareness of a purpose and an audience for writing. Without publication of finished works, the writing process itself has not been completed. Without some type of publication or display of their work, students may lose the sense that their writing is a meaningful communication. Furthermore, if there is no prospect of publication, students may lose the desire to improve their writing. The students' finished works may be published in various forms, such as:

- Class books
- School or grade-level newspapers
- Class literary magazine
- School handbook
- School anthology
- Children's magazines such as *Highlights for Children, Jack and Jill*
- Pen pal letters
- Poetry booklet
- PTA newsletter
- Display of stories in the library
- Bulletin board display in halls or classroom
- Written work exchanged with a class in another school
- Oral reading of work to the class, in an assembly, or to family members
- Broadcasts over the PA system or in-school TV

It is important to note that not every written piece that a student begins will be published. However, a teacher should make every effort to insure that students do develop some of their written work well enough to be published. The recognition and self-satisfaction that students get from having their written work seen by others are most important.

An Effective Writing Program

An operational definition of writing and strong program ingredients must be the basis for any efforts to improve student writing within the school situation. Planners of writing programs and classroom teachers must begin with an adequate conception of what writing is. In the NCTE statement, writing is described as ". . .the process of selecting, combining, arranging and developing ideas in effective sentences, paragraphs, and, often, longer units of discourse. The process requires the writer to cope with a number of variables: method of development (narrating, explaining, describing, reporting, and persuading); tone (from the very personal to quite formal); form (from a limerick to a formal letter to a long research report); purpose (from discovering and expressing personal feelings and values to conducting the impersonal 'business' of everyday life); possible audiences (oneself, classmates, a teacher, 'the world')." Improving one's writing ability involves developing increasing skill and sensitivity in selecting from and combining these variables to shape particular pieces of writing. It also involves learning to conform to the conventions of the printed language appropriate to the aim of the writer and to the form, purpose, and tone of the pieces of writing.

In developing school writing programs, planners and teachers must keep in mind the characteristics of an effective writing program. These characteristics are described in the following chart, which has been expanded from "Standards for Basic Skills Writing Programs," published by the National Council of Teachers of English, Urbana, IL, March 1979.

Characteristics of an Effective Writing Program

Factors	Examples	How Identified
1. The writing program reflects an awareness of current theory and research in writing.	1. Writing activities reflect the awareness that writing is a process. Students must be given the opportunity to think and plan, to compose on paper, to revise, to proofread, to share.	1. Is time provided for instruction in and use of the prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing stages of writing?
	2. Writing instruction is *not* equated with grammar and mechanics instruction.	2. Is the writing instruction based on whole pieces of writing rather than grammar exercises, workbooks, and ditto sheets?
	3. Teachers value writing and are models for the students.	3. Do teachers write and share their writing with the students?
	4. Students are given help during the writing process rather than after the work is completed.	4. Do teachers respond at various stages of the writing process, rather than limit their responses to the finished product?

Factors	Examples	How Identified
2. Writing instruction is a substantial and clearly identified part of an integrated English language arts program.	1. Writing is done on a regular, planned basis, not just when it can be "squeezed in." 2. Writing is part of the language arts curriculum. 3. Writing is not limited to responses to literature.	1. Do lesson plans show that writing is scheduled on a regular basis? 2. Does the district have a K-12 language arts curriculum which provides for listening, speaking, reading, and writing to be taught at all grade levels? 3. Is writing used for a variety of purposes and audiences?
3. The subject matter of the writing activities is meaningful to the students.	Students are frequently given the opportunity to generate their own topics for composition.	Do writing activities give the students the opportunity to express their own feelings, experiences, ideas, knowledge, research, imagination, etc.? Are the writing activities ones that the students can recognize as having meaning and utility in their lives outside the classroom?
4. Students are taught to write in many forms.	1. Student writing includes summaries, notes, captions, poems, journal entries, reviews, descriptions. 2. Students write both long and short pieces.	1. Does instruction extend beyond the tasks on a writing test? 2. Are models of new types of writing made available to students and discussed?
5. Students are taught to write for a variety of audiences.	Activities give students the opportunity to write for themselves, for other students, for parents, for younger children.	Does the teacher see that writing is shared with appropriate audiences? Are students made aware of the differences between public and private writing?
6. Students are taught to write for a variety of purposes.	Activities give students the opportunity to write for purposes, such as to express personal feelings, to explain, to define, to clarify thinking, to consolidate information, to describe, to narrate.	Does instruction extend beyond the tasks on a writing test?

Factors	Examples	How Identified
7. Students are encouraged to compose during class time.	1. Students are given the time to talk about their planning, drafting, revising, and editing.	1. Is there provision for regular small-group work and partnered activities? Do students write often and on a regular basis?
	2. Teacher-student conferences are a regular feature of instruction.	2. Do conferences take place during the writing process? Are teachers available to students when the students are writing?
	3. Class time is devoted to all aspects of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing.	3. Is there an awareness that students may be in different stages of the composing process at the same time?
	4. Resources such as dictionaries thesauruses, grammar texts, writing models are available to students.	4. Is there a "writing corner" in the classroom? Do teachers model the use of resources and encourage students to use them?
8. Students receive instruction in expressing ideas as well as instruction in developing control over conventions such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, sentence structure.	1. Instruction in conventions of written standard English is based on the students' own writing rather than on workbook exercises.	1. Is the focus of instruction on communicating ideas rather than on mechanics?
	2. Conventions of written standard English are developed by going through the writing process.	2. Is emphasis on writing conventions reserved for the revising and editing phase rather than the drafting phase?
9. Students receive constructive responses to their own writing.	1. Classroom atmosphere encourages valuing of students' work.	1. Do teachers respond positively to the efforts and accomplishments of the students?
	2. No attempt is made to note every error.	2. Are comments focused on a limited number of areas?
	3. Teachers respond at various stages of the writing and do not wait until it is finished.	3. Is the writing responded to by teachers and peers at various stages of the process? Are responses focused by key questions and worded constructively?
	4. Students participate in the evaluation process.	4. From several pieces of writing, does the student select pieces to have evaluated? Are peer conferences used from time to time as part of the evaluation of writing?

Factors	Examples	How Identified
10. Writing is called for in other subject areas across the curriculum.	Students write reports, directions, explanations, etc., using the content area subject matter.	Does the curriculum indicate any objectives, activities, etc. relative to writing in the content areas?
11. There is both formative (ongoing) and summative (concluding) evaluation.	1. Pretests and posttests using whole pieces of writing are used for evaluating progress. 2. Teacher-student conferences are a vital part of the evaluation procedure. 3. There is evidence of growth in papers written at different times.	1. Have pretests and posttests been analyzed and suitable instruction provided? 2. Do teachers use writing folders as a basis for conferences? 3. Are there evaluated writing samples or other documentation of progress in the student folders?
12. Suitable methods of program evaluation have been established.	1. Evaluation is based on examination of whole pieces of writing. 2. Consistent scoring methods are employed for both pretests and posttests, using a recognized procedure: e.g., holistic rating, primary trait scoring, Diederich scale, etc. 3. Affective measures evaluate student attitudes as well as progress.	1. Is each student required to have a writing folder which is reviewed periodically? 2. Is there evidence of student progress as a result of instruction? 3. Do the students have a positive attitude toward writing?

Expectations for Student Writing

Having been presented with an explanation of the composing process and the characteristics of an effective writing program, a teacher might logically ask: What should elementary school writers be able to do?

Two lists of writing tasks are given in the following charts, one which specifies the expectations for student writing for grades K-3 and one for grades 4-6. Because of the wide variation in individual abilities and backgrounds, the expectations are grouped in levels and not expressed grade by grade. For each writing task listed, specific comments and/or approaches that should prove useful in working with student writers are indicated. Note that, with few exceptions, the tasks are expressed in terms of a whole piece of writing, i.e., the end product of the composing process. Students will need to write various types of pieces many times in order to develop and refine their skills and to increase the ease and fluency of their writing. The teaching of particular skills, such as how to organize information or how to use standard punctuation, is most effective when handled within the process.

Expectations for Student Writing: Level I (Grades K-3)

For each task, the teacher and students will identify the purpose and audience.

Writing Tasks	Comments
Students will be able to write:	
1. Journal entries, sometimes using teacher-suggested topics and sometimes self-selected topics	Journal entries are generally exploratory writing. They may be used as a prewriting activity. Kindergarten children may use drawings, invented spellings, etc., as journal entries at first; older children may begin making journal entries as a statement of an activity of the day.
2. Words, phrases, captions, labels	Oral word games promote vocabulary development at all levels. Reading, speaking, and writing skills can be enhanced by asking children to think of words to label, to describe, and to use as captions for pictures. At first children may dictate the word, phrase, and caption, but later many children can print labels and captions.
3. Sentences, moving from dictated to independently written	Children can explore the concept of a complete sentence orally before writing complete sentences. Introduce capitalization and end punctuation when the children are actually writing sentences. The idea that punctuation and capitalization are aids to the reader should be integrated with reading instruction.
4. Narratives, moving from oral to written form	Children may dictate a narrative of personal experience before being able to write sentences, words, phrases, or captions. By careful questioning, the teacher should elicit additional information and help children put incidents in order. Such questioning can be a part of the prewriting activity when children move to the written form. The narratives, when brought through the complete composing process, can be used in reading instruction.

5. Friendly letters, such as a thank-you note, an invitation	The form of a friendly letter should be taught or reviewed as part of the prewriting. The letters themselves should be part of a genuine occasion and mailed or delivered.
6. Poems, structured such as haiku, cinquain, or limerick, and free form	Brainstorming for descriptive words and colorful action words and practice with the form the particular task requires may be parts of the prewriting activity. A good way to "publish" the finished pieces is to have groups use them for choral readings for an audience of peers.
7. Descriptive paragraphs involving related sentences	Some possible prewriting activities include observing a particular place and taking notes, brainstorming appropriate sensory words, or drawing a picture. It may be necessary to teach or review the concept that a paragraph contains related sentences and is signaled by an indentation. Children may need help during the drafting stage in developing a logical sequence or during the revision state in rearranging sentences to form a logical sequence.
8. Paragraphs of autobiography, moving from oral to written form	Instead of a complete autobiography, the teacher should help the children with a unified paragraph by suggesting opening sentences, such as: The most important thing that ever happened to me was _____; I am the one who _____; I am proud of being (doing) _____.
9. Reports based on facts gathered from observation and/or reading	The teacher should require report writing from observation as well as from reading. Observations of classroom pets, art or science projects, and school activities are possibilities. Using the composing process for report writing is easily combined with instruction in subjects other than language arts.
10. Paragraphs giving directions to get from one area to another	At this level, the directions need to be simple. The idea that directions need to be sequential is the important concept. Prewriting could include students taking turns giving oral directions to each other to take literally for moving from one area of the classroom to another. This activity provides a good opportunity to combine speaking, listening, and writing skills.
11. Paragraphs explaining how to do a specific task	For most children at this level, the task should not involve more than four or five steps. The concept of sequence or logical order is important. Having children take turns giving oral directions for some simple activity and having other children take turns following the directions literally are good prewriting activities which also provide practice in speaking and listening skills.
12. Summary sentences based on oral or written information	Listening or reading for the main idea is an important skill. The teacher can be more confident that a child has understood the main idea if the child can restate it in his or her own words.

Expectations for Student Writing: Level II (Grades 4-6)

For each task, the teacher and students will identify the purpose and audience.

Writing Tasks	Comments
Students will be able to write:	
1. Journal entries, sometimes using teacher-suggested topics and sometimes self-selected topics	The practice of writing in journals at least two or three times each week should continue at this level. Children should be encouraged to look back over their journals to select topics they might like to develop to the publication stage.
2. Paragraphs involving topic sentence and supporting details	Although not all paragraphs are structured in this fashion, it is a practical structure for students to know. The content of these paragraphs can be from subject areas other than English.
3. Narratives of personal experience	This task is a continuation of a similar task in Level I. At this level students may be expected to give more detail and use more varied sentence structure.
4. Single-paragraph to multi-paragraph pieces giving directions in logical sequence	This task is an extension of a similar task in Level I. Pieces involve the use of direction words (north, south, up, down), and sequencing words (first, then, after). Simple map reading or map drawing is a possible prewriting activity.
5. Single-paragraph to multi-paragraph pieces explaining how to do a specific task in logical order	This task is an extension of a similar task in Level I; however, at this level, it may involve a few more steps. The directions should concern a real classroom activity as often as possible, such as how to set up a science experiment or how to complete an art project.
6. Multi-paragraph reports based on observation and/or investigation	Subtasks involved in this task are note-taking and organizing information. Also involved are the abilities to recognize relevant information and to recognize the difference between fact and opinion. Children should have opportunities to write reports from direct observation as well as from reading.
7. Friendly letters, such as a thank-you note, an invitation, a letter to a friend or relative	This task is a continuation of the letter writing task of Level I. The occasions for the letters should be real and the letters actually mailed. Letters to absent classmates or to pen pals can be important writing activities.
8. Business letters of request	A business letter form should be introduced in the intermediate grades. The letters should be real, asking for information, free materials, etc.
9. Autobiographies	The autobiography should be more extensive than the autobiographical paragraph listed in the Level I expectations. A class album, including snapshots, is a good publication. The teacher's autobiography should be included.

10. News articles including who, what, where, when, why, and how	Many skills are involved, including note-taking, using the inverted pyramid style of writing, and recognizing the difference between fact and opinion. The news article could be based on a community, classroom, or school sports activity. Sometimes having students write a news article based on an incident in a story or fable they are reading is a good way to develop their understanding of the story and also to practice the news article format.
11. Headlines capturing the main idea	Headlines can be written for the news article above or as a way of interpreting the main idea of material students have read in one of the content areas.
12. Feature articles using narration or description	Reading feature articles in a children's newspaper or magazine and discussing their characteristics are ways of preparing for this task. The use of specific detail should be stressed and revisions made if not enough specific detail has been included.
13. Editorials stating personal opinion and giving supporting ideas	An important concept for students to learn is that a statement of opinion should be supported by details, reasons, examples. The editorial should be on a subject relevant to the students' experience.
14. Advertisements or commercials involving elements of persuasion and mass appeal	The task involves recognizing a product's attributes, using key descriptive terms, and using attention-getting techniques, such as jingles and alliteration. The task can lead to the task of writing a persuasive paragraph. Writing an advertisement for an absurd product can lead to a discussion of propaganda techniques. Performing the commercial can be a speaking/listening activity.
15. Persuasive paragraphs making a statement and using supporting evidence	The task differs from the editorial in that the paragraph has the purpose of persuading someone to do something and may have a much more limited audience.
16. Poems, riddles, tongue twisters	The tasks afford pleasure and increase facility with language at the same time. Rhythm, figurative language, and, in some cases, rhyme are involved. The poems may be free verse or follow a structure the teacher has taught or reviewed.
17. Dialogues involving fictional characters, real people, or animals	"Publication" may include rehearsal and oral reading of the dialogue by two or more students.
18. Summaries of literary works, moving from single-paragraph to multi-paragraph pieces	The summary will help the students recognize the elements of a short story, including plot, character, setting, theme.
19. Brief short stories including the elements of character, setting, and plot	Students may need to discuss or review the elements of stories they have read recently and possibly plan the stories they intend to write by charting the characters, the place of action, the action (conflicts), and the conclusion (resolution). The stories can be made into a class anthology.

20. Fables including the elements of character, setting, action, and moral	Prewriting includes reading selected fables and identifying characteristics which make a fable different from a short story. The class might invent several morals as a group before individual students select one to use. An illustrated anthology of the fables brought to the publication stage could be an addition to the class library.
21. Skits involving plot, dialogue, and setting	Students could use the skits or short plays they have read in class as models, noting the elements specific to a play, such as stage directions, scene introductions, and punctuation of dialogue. The skits should be performed.
22. Character studies involving generalizations and specifics based on characters in stories or plays	The task involves both literal and inferential interpretation. The concept of supporting a generalization with appropriate details is important.
23. Personal responses to literature	The task involves interpretation and evaluation. Students should clearly understand the difference between a summary and a response.

Organizing the Classroom for Writing

The first question that comes to mind when a teacher considers the steps in the composing process is: How do I find time to go through all these steps with everything else I have to do? One answer is to spend much less time on ditto sheets and language arts workbooks which deal with subskills of writing rather than with the development of a whole piece of writing. Another answer is to integrate writing into other aspects of the elementary curriculum.

Creating a positive classroom environment is essential not only to teaching the composing process (or anything else, for that matter) but also to saving time in the long run by helping children develop as independent writers. The classroom environment itself can be motivational and helpful to students and time-saving for a teacher. Motivational activities within that environment take time initially, but save time eventually in achieving the objectives of the program. Following are some suggestions which may be helpful in classroom management.

Using the Classroom

The classroom itself can be a good learning tool. Try:

- Posting expectations for the current writing assignment
- Displaying a checklist for revising and editing
- Exhibiting examples of the finished product (work done by last year's students or work of your own)
- Posting a chart of the stages of the writing process
- Creating word bank mobiles
- Exhibiting the finished products on bulletin boards

Using Writing Folders

There are three kinds of writing folders that seem to work very well for students and for the teacher:

- **Work-In-Progress Folder** — In these folders, students keep all the work they have done in the prewriting, writing, and postwriting stages of the current writing assignment. Whenever they have free time, they go to these folders and work on the assignment. This allows the students a degree of independence and permits them to take advantage of a sudden inspiration.

  A list of writing topics can be stapled in the front of the work-in-progress folders. Early in the year, have the students brainstorm for subjects that they know something about and about which they would like to tell the class. Each student makes his or her own list from the topics generated, and throughout the year the student can choose from these topics, select the form, and write. This kind of brainstorming can be done periodically throughout the year to renew the list.
- **Finished-Product Folder** — Students enjoy accumulating and keeping their work; they also enjoy seeing the progress they have made and the different kinds of writing they have done. These folders should be given to the students at the end of the year.

  The finished product should be stapled on top of

all the other sheets of paper used in the production of that piece of writing: the prewriting, the drafting, the revising, and the editing sheets. This will give students a sense of accomplishment, reinforce the stages of the writing process, and remind students that all stages of the process are important in producing a publishable work.

- **Cumulative Folder** — A folder that can be sent with the student to the next grade level provides both students and teachers with a historical reference point. In this folder should be pieces of writing that demonstrate both the strengths and weaknesses of the student's writing. The teacher may choose some, but the student should also be allowed to select representative pieces. Four to five pieces should be selected each year.

Writing Center

Establish in the classroom a writing center — a corner or area of the room devoted only to writing. Allow students to use the writing center whenever they have time. Here can be kept:

- Work-in-progress folders
- Finished product folders
- Word banks
- Mystery box (student draws out story starters, pictures, etc. that stimulate writing)
- Vocabulary cards
- Poems
- Tapes of old radio programs
- Skill sheets
- Dictionaries and thesauruses
- Newspapers
- A typewriter
- Paper of various types and sizes
- A variety of writing implements
- Scissors, paste, and tape

Establishing such a center helps the students understand the importance and the joy of writing. This center is also an excellent place to hold individual writing conferences.

Analyses of Student Writing

There are two types of analyses of student writing: an analysis of the *process* a student goes through while writing and an analysis of the student's written work, the *product*. By analyzing the way in which a student works through the stages of the composing process as well as by analyzing the finished product, the teacher will have a complete picture of a student's writing ability.

While it is necessary to identify the strengths and weaknesses in each student's writing, priorities should be set so that a teacher does not attempt to address every problem simultaneously. Both teacher and student should focus on specific goals in order to make instruction manageable and meaningful.

Analysis of a Student's Writing Process

Students use a variety of approaches to writing. Some sit and think a long time before beginning to write, some jot down notes, some write immediately and do not stop until the entire work is done, some work on parts of the writing, etc. The questions which follow generally apply to whichever approach is used.

The teacher can analyze a student's writing process by observing and by interviewing the student. The information obtained by using the following questions can provide clues to the specific help a student might need.

Prewriting

Does the student:

- Analyze the key elements of the task?
- Consider the purpose and audience?
- Spend time thinking, inventing, brainstorming, or talking out ideas with peers?
- Spend time planning and organizing?

Writing

Does the student:

- Revise as the work is being composed or complete the draft and then revise or not revise at all?
- Pause in the writing process for thinking and rereading, or pause because of frustration?
- Focus on communicating ideas or is the student overly concerned with the mechanics of writing?
- Seek help from peers and/or teacher?
- Use available resources (library, dictionary, thesaurus, etc.)?

Revising

Does the student:

- Add, delete, change, or reorganize what has been written?
- Edit and proofread?

Teachers and/or schools may want to put these questions into some form of checklist, perhaps with a "usually, sometimes, never" format for use periodically.

Analysis of a Student's Writing Product

For analyzing the writing product the teacher can use the responses to the Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools. By using the statements on the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet, the teacher can determine strengths and weaknesses in the student's writing, which should prove helpful in planning instruction. (See pages 15–16.)

Analyses of sample student responses to tasks on Form L of the grade 5 writing test are provided on pages 20–35. Responses for both parts of the test have been analyzed for three students in order to determine their strengths and note recurring errors.

Using the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet

It is recommended that the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet be used to analyze the student's written responses to the two parts of the Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools. It also could be used on occasion when the teacher is monitoring student growth through a "formal" evaluation of student writing, perhaps at midyear and in June. Because of the amount of time and extent of detail involved in using the analysis sheet, it would not be useful for day-to-day classroom writing. This is not to suggest that the writing elements included in the analysis sheet are not important on a day-to-day basis, but that the sheet should be used to diagnose, set long-range priority goals, and monitor growth. A simple checklist, perhaps based on the 1-4 rating scale given in the grade 5 writing test manual for administrators and teachers would be more useful for day-to-day writing activities. (Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools, Grade 5 — Form L, Manual for Administrators and Teachers [Preliminary Edition], 1983)

Because the task of diagnosing student writing and suggesting instructional strategies is time-consuming, the following procedures are suggested:

(1) Regardless of who rated the student responses to the writing test, fifth-grade teachers should receive the papers written by their students.

(2) Using the columns labeled "Diagnosis/Comments," the fifth-grade teacher should diagnose and/or comment on the papers of students falling below the State Reference Point. The diagnosis should be based on both parts of the test and may include any related comments that only the student's fifth-grade teacher could know; e.g., "This was atypical of this student's usual writing ability." The fifth-grade teacher may want to suggest particular instructional strategies that he or she knows have worked with this student or suggest priorities to serve as goals.

(3) If time permits, this procedure could be done by the fifth-grade teacher for students scoring above the State Reference Point.

(4) The students' test responses and the teacher's diagnosis/comments on the analysis sheets should be forwarded to the sixth-grade teacher early in the fall. The sixth-grade teacher should review the fifth-grade teacher's diagnosis and comments, set priorities, and in the column labeled "Instructional Statements" note those teaching techniques she or he feels would be suitable. This type of diagnosis/prescription also provides information useful in planning peer or group activities for skills development. Some suggested techniques and activities can be found by referring to earlier sections on The Composing Process, An Effective Writing Program, Expectations for Student Writing, and Organizing the Classroom for Writing.

In this way, the burden of diagnosing/prescribing is shared, and there is some articulation between grade levels.

It should be noted that the teacher should concentrate on providing instruction based on the Task/Content and Organization parts of the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet and not on the Mechanics/Usage parts. Emphasis should be placed on the student's ability to communicate effectively in writing. The conventions of written standard English are only a part of effective communication and, as such, should not be the major or sole focus of an instructional program.

Description of the Analysis Sheet

The analysis sheet on pages 15 and 16 is divided into sections labeled: Task/Content, Organization, Sentence Structure, Language, and Mechanics/Usage. Each section has subsections which are explained in more detail on page 17. A clear understanding of the subsections should provide as complete and accurate an analysis as possible, as well as consistency of interpretation.

Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools
Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet

Name _____ Grade _____ Date _____

School _____ Teacher's Name _____

Star(*) Priority Item(s)	*Diagnosis/Comments* *Part 1*	*Part 2*	*Instructional Statements*
The student needs instruction in: **Task/Content** a. Responding appropriately to the requirements of the task (audience, purpose, form, etc.) b. Providing sufficient information to respond adequately to the task (ideas, explanations, examples, etc.) c. Selecting appropriate information for focus or emphasis d. Excluding irrelevant material e. Maintaining a consistent point of view			
Organization a. Unifying the piece by means of appropriate generalization b. Supporting generalization and conclusions by providing reasons, details, examples, etc. c. Making logical connections			

Star(*) Priority Item(s)	*Diagnosis/Comments* *Part 1*	*Part 2*	*Instructional Statements*
Sentence Structure			
a. Avoiding sentence fragments			
b. Avoiding run-on sentences			
c. Using sentences of varied types and lengths			
Language			
a. Using specific, vivid words			
b. Forming words correctly			
c. Using words accurately			
d. Avoiding unnecessary repetition			
Mechanics/Usage			
a. Developing spelling skills			
b. Using punctuation correctly			
c. Using capital letters correctly			
d. Usage Subject/verb agreement Verb tenses Pronoun references Other: _____ _____ _____ _____			
e. Improving handwriting			

Task/Content

a. Responding appropriately to the requirements of the task

The task states specifically what the topic is and what the student must do. Some tasks may designate a specific audience to whom the student is to write; a specific purpose, e.g., to inform, to explain, to describe; and/or a specific form, e.g., a story, a composition.

Some student responses may be off the topic or show that the writer misunderstood or misinterpreted the task.

b. Providing sufficient information to respond adequately to the task

The response should include enough information to fulfill the requirements of the task. Some students have a tendency to write too much on a topic; most write too little.

c. Selecting appropriate information for focus or emphasis

Not all information has the same weight. Some information is more important, and the student should be able to select this information for focus or emphasis.

d. Excluding irrelevant detail

Information not on the topic or related to the task should be omitted.

e. Maintaining a consistent point of view

Point of view may be defined as "from whose 'eyes' " the story is being told. For example, some students may begin writing from an "I" or other designated point of view and shift to a "he." They may mix points of view by starting in one, going to another, then returning to the original point of view. It is important to maintain the required point of view throughout the piece of writing.

Organization

a. Unifying the piece by means of appropriate generalization

The writer should have a main idea statement which serves as a focal point for the rest of the writing.

b. Supporting generalization and conclusions by providing reasons, details, examples, etc.

The main idea should be supported and developed through the use of examples, details, reasons, etc. Frequently, student writers will simply give support material but not develop it.

c. Making logical connections

The writer should show the logical connections between such things as cause and effect, and the order in sequential or chronological events. The writer should make some attempt to use transitions within the pieces: e.g., "first," "then," "last," when appropriate.

Sentence Structure

a. Avoiding sentence fragments

The writer should use complete sentences and avoid the use of sentence fragments.

b. Avoiding run-on sentences

The writer should not run sentences together.

c. Using sentences of varied types and lengths

The writer should use sentences of varying patterns and lengths to avoid monotony.

Language

a. Using specific, vivid words

The writer should attempt to use specific, vivid words and should avoid common, trite language such as "nice," "pretty," etc.

b. Forming words correctly

Errors may occur when adding prefixes or, more commonly, when adding suffixes; e.g., "He ran quickerly."

c. Using words accurately

There are many possible types of errors that can occur here. An example might be the misuse of "would of" for "would have." The overuse of words, especially the excessive use of adjectives, may be another problem area.

d. Avoiding unnecessary repetition

The writer should not repeat words, phrases, or ideas unnecessarily.

Mechanics/Usage

a. Developing spelling skills

b. Using punctuation correctly

c. Using capital letters correctly

d. Usage

This refers to the standard way in which words are used in writing the English language. Some types of errors may include "I'd of went with you" and "more easier."

Subject/verb agreement: singular subjects take singular verbs and plural subjects take plural verbs. Some examples of errors might be "We was..." or "She give..."

Verb tenses: some errors will be the result of forming the past tense and past participle of irregular verbs as though they were regular, e.g., "runned" or "tolded." Other errors may be the result of a shift from one tense to another without reason or purpose; e.g., "Tomorrow I stayed home."

Pronoun references: this refers to the ambiguous or incorrect relationships between pronouns and antecedents; e.g., "The principal selected Tom because he knows what's best." It may also occur when no antecedent is given; e.g., "we went to the State fair, and I won it there."

e. Improving handwriting

Analyses of Sample Student Responses

A diagnosis has been done for each of the writing samples of three students. These diagnoses are found on pages 20–35 and are an illustration of the kinds of comments and suggestions teachers could make. Obviously, not all of these extensive comments could fit on the analysis sheet. Some abbreviated form or code system might be used. (See pages 36–37.) School districts and/or teachers may want to develop their own code system to expedite and facilitate the diagnosis/prescribing process. Some excellent suggestions are given in Chapter 28 of *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* by Donald Graves. (See bibliography.)

The two parts of Form L of the grade 5 writing test are given below.

Part 1

> After you get up some days, nothing seems to go right
>
> Write a composition of about 150 words telling about a day when nothing seemed to go right for you.

Part 2

> Pretend that you are only five inches tall.
>
> Write a composition of about 150 words telling what your life as a five-inch person is like.

Form L

Part 1: Sample Student Response

Student April

After you get up some days, nothing seems go right. First I missed my bus. My mom and dad weren't home. We didn't go shopping yet so we didn't have any milk. Then it got late and begin to be the afternoon. I know that my mom would be home pretty soon. So I just waited, but when she got home she was mad at me. The she gave me some lunch; what I had was a paice of pizza and some eggs and some cake, and last I had some soda. My mother has went shopping so we would have some milk. Soon my dad came home it was late, so I went to bed. But I could not sleep because it started to snow and that ment we would get are tres.

Part 1

Diagnosis/Comments	*Instructional Statements*
Task/Content	
1. This student apparently understands the task and has attempted to present a series of events in response to the task. However, all the information seems to have the same focus and emphasis. 2. There is some sense of closure in the piece, i.e., the end of the day with a suggestion about tomorrow. 3. There is a shift in focus in the middle. 4. The description of the lunch is irrelevant as are the references to the mother's shopping and the father's coming home.	Help the student see the relationships between ideas. "I missed my bus" *and since* "my mom and dad weren't home," the student did not go to school. Work with this student to show the student that the lunch description is unimportant and irrelevant and to generate other information that could possibly be used. Peers might be useful here in a short brainstorming session.
Organization	
1. The student has used the task as a unifying idea and organized the writing chronologically: "First," "then," "it was late." 2. Superficial support material is given. The student's attempt at a conclusion is praiseworthy. 3. Logical connections of cause and effect are generally absent.	Review with the student the prewriting notes to see what ideas were written down and how they were grouped. Suggest possible alternatives and areas for development. Question the student as to the importance of statements such as "soon my dad came home."
Sentence Structure	
Weakness in sentence structure is evident. There is little variety in the type or length of the sentences the student uses. There are several instances of run-on sentences.	Use sentence-embedding techniques or sentence-combining techniques to help the student develop sentences that have variety and are of varied lengths. Again, peer group work could be useful here.
Language	
1. The language is ordinary and lacks detail and vividness. 2. Some words have been omitted.	In conference, orally read through the writing and help the student select more vivid language. Point out the proper formation of contractions. Point out the differences between "our" and "are."
Mechanics/Usage	
1. There are a few spelling errors: "frist," "paice," "pizze," "ment," etc. 2. The problems with sentence structure result in errors in punctuation. 3. Capitalization does not seem to be a problem. 4. Most verbs are formed correctly and used correctly except for "begin" and "has went."	Since the word "meant" is used frequently, have the student add the word to the student's master spelling list. Handle the other misspellings in the editing part of the revision process.

Form L
Part 2: Sample Student Response

Student April

Pretend that you are only five inches tall. What I think is that it could be fun but not to fun. What I think would be scare is if you were to look up. I was told that if they looked up you would look like a gaint. But now back to the story if you were five inches tall you could be stepedon or put in a can. I now I wouldn't went to be put in a locker or be eaten by a cat or dog. Or even be put in a washer and dryer or put in a sink or a garabeg can. Bony thing would not went to be small.

Part 2

Diagnosis/Comments	*Instructional Statements*
Task/Content	
The student understands that the task is to speculate about what it would be like to be five inches tall, but the student's writing lacks focus. The student does not understand the task specifically; i.e., "tell what your life as a five-inch-tall person is like." The student does sense that the story is wandering, because the student writes "now back to the story." The student manages to think of several possibilities for disaster but does not refer again to the comment in the second sentence, "it could be fun." There is a shift in point of view: "you would look like a giant" and "if you were 5 inches tall."	Ask the student to rewrite the composition, developing just one of the many possible ideas inherent in the original piece. For example, as a prewriting activity, help the student make a list of what familiar things would look like from a height of five inches. Another possibility is a list of things that might be fun, or of possible events arranged in chronological order. A small peer group could help the student develop the list.
Organization	
The student provides some details, beginning at the middle of the paragraph, to support the idea that it would be dangerous to be small. The student also has a notion that a paragraph has a beginning and an end, even if the beginning is only to repeat the question.	Because the student has a sense that organization is needed, it should not be too difficult to help the student take one of the lists she has developed and find a pattern for logical relationships or chronological order. Have the student cut apart the ideas on the lists and then rearrange them. Peer or teacher conferences can be used to help the student plan before beginning to write.
Sentence Structure	
The student attempts an interesting sentence construction, "I was told that if they looked up you would look like a giant." It seems as if the sentence is an experiment with a sophisticated construction that contrasts with the run-on and the fragments. The student does attempt to use varied sentence structure, but there is some repetition of sentence beginnings.	It seems as if the student is on the verge of mastering sentence structure. Practice in rewriting these sentences in various ways, yet achieving a complete sentence each time, should help the student.
Language	
There is some attempt to be specific: "put in a locker," "in a washer and dryer," but part of the lack of specificity is due to the original misconception of the task. There is one problem with forming words: "stepedon" instead of "stepped on."	Understanding the task as "a day in the life of..." might help the student develop more specific language. The student should ask herself questions such as: What kind of can? What kind of dog? What would happen in the washer and dryer? It may be that problems in word formation are partially due to lack of proofreading.
Mechanics/Usage	
The student has spelling problems, but not much trouble with capitalization, handwriting, or usage.	Drill the student on some words, such as "know" and "want." Encourage the student to circle other words such as "garbage" in the rough draft and then check the spelling before doing a final copy.

Summary

Both of the student's responses reveal some consistent problem areas. While the student seems to have some understanding of both tasks, the student digresses and has trouble carrying ideas to completion. The student has attempted to organize the writing but shows consistent problems of omitting words, misspelling words, and writing sentence fragments. The teacher and the student need to select a limited number of goals to work toward together.

Form L
Part 1: Sample Student Response

Student Lisa

The Day that Everthing went Wrong

The day that nothing went right was the day I caught the flu from a classmate

That morning, something went wrong with my alarm clock. It didn't go off at the right time. I knew I'd be late for school.

As I hurried through breakfast, a glass of milk that was on the table spilled on my pants and the floor. After cleaning up the mess on the floor, I had trouble finding a pair of pants to change into.

I had to run to school so I wouldn't be marked absent on the attendence record at 9:00 A.M.

I finally got to school, and then I remembered I forgot my mathbook at home.

Later that morning, I took a science test. I failed it.

When it was time for lunch,

[OVER]

I discovered I had lost my lunch money. By now I had a headache. I thought I was catching a cold.

When I got home from school, I went into the backyard and found a broken chain where my dog had been tied up. He had run away.

Later, a friend and I were talking on the telephone and got into an argument over sports.

By then I wasn't feeling too well. I had a high fever. That was the worst part of the day— when I came down with the flu!

I hope I never have a day like that again!

Part 1

Diagnosis/Comments	*Instructional Statements*
Task/Content	
The student has a clear understanding of what is required by the task and has selected information for focus and emphasis. The student has presented a complete series of events and excluded irrelevant material.	It is very important to provide this student with challenges to increase her abilities by writing for a variety of purposes and audiences, and in a variety of forms.
Organization	
The student has a major unifying idea statement and secondary idea statements. The student has provided details and examples as support material and has used connectors. Each idea is a separate paragraph, however, and the material could be better organized.	Have the student look back at the prewriting notes or outline to see if more grouping can be done to unify ideas. Provide some help in this process by asking if ideas could be grouped by time (morning, lunchtime, after school) or by place (home, school, etc.) to help improve organization and paragraphing.
Sentence Structure	
There are no run-on sentences or fragments. There is a variety of sentence types and lengths.	Praise the student for what she has done well in sentence variety and length of sentences. Work with the student on sentence-combining techniques to provide even greater sentence variety and differing sentence lengths.
Language	
Words are formed and used correctly and there is no unnecessary repetition. There is only one example of a specific, vivid word: "hurried," the rest are appropriate but ordinary.	Vocabulary development for a student of this ability should be a priority and prove to be relatively easy. Have the student keep a list of words she finds particularly interesting from her reading of literature and even other students' writing. Have the student play word games, write alliterative sentences, etc.
Mechanics/Usage	
Only one word is misspelled: "attendence." There are no other errors in mechanics or usage.	The student's abilities can be useful in peer groups where she may serve as a resource for students who are in the process of developing the abilities she has.

Form L
Part 2: Sample Student Response

Student Lisa

Life As a Short Person

I am a 20 year old female, even though I am only 5 inches tall. My home is an apartment— a 5 room deluxe shoebox. I'm very famous around the world.

A robot maid cleans my dishes made of shell. My bed is a jewelry box, and is very comfortable.

As I go to sleep every night, I remember my troubled times when I was younger. Mice used to chase me, but not anymore a professional exterminator got rid of them. Nobody wants to lose the only 5-inch person in the world!

The first time I walked to school was a tiresome journey! For someone a normal size it might not be so bad. But my parents forgot what a hike it would be for me. I was driven to and from school after that.

Going across a wet street is

[OVER]

a swim for me, but stores don't sell my size of doll clothes.

My mother goes shopping for me. I can't go, because I am afraid I'll get stepped on. Besides, everyone would want my autograph, and a pen's too big!

I've thought of joining the circus, but the sight of tigers sends chills up my spine. Once a tiger tried to step on me.

There must be some good points of being short. I guess I haven't found them yet!

Part 2

Diagnosis/Comments	*Instructional Statements*
Task/Content	
The student's development of the content required by the task is imaginative and well detailed. The student focuses on the fame that a person five inches tall might have and has an excellent series of problems and solutions. The student is consistent in keeping the point of view of someone five inches tall but is slightly inconsistent at the end by saying that she has not found the good points yet.	Ask the student whether she considers the fame a good or bad point—perhaps the student is consistent after all. Clearly, the student is ready to try many types of writing tasks with different purposes and audiences. The student might be encouraged to develop her own topics, to write stories for younger children, to write news reports, to write and act in skits, to write poetry, etc.
Organization	
The focus of the piece helps keep it well organized. It is unified with logical connectors: exterminator for mice, swimming across a wet street, pens too big. There is also a unifying time element in that the past, present, and future are all alluded to. Paragraphing could be improved.	Interview the student to find out how she planned the composition and what helped the student get ideas. Based on the interview, plan instruction or activities that would help the student develop as a writer. Suggest paragraphing by locale, time, or activity.
Sentence Structure	
The student uses a variety of sentence structures and does not have a problem with fragments and run-on sentences.	
Language	
The student uses specific, vivid words: "a 5 room deluxe shoebox," "my troubled times," "my dishes made of shell." The student has no problems with forming and using words accurately.	The student is probably a good reader as well as a good writer. Discuss with the student the writer's craft in using language in the literature the student enjoys, in order to encourage her to experiment further with language.
Mechanics/Usage	
A fifth grader who can spell "exterminator," "professional," and "tiresome" is a spelling resource rather than a candidate for remediation. No problems are evident in mechanics and usage.	If this student has learned to work cooperatively with peers, have the student help other students edit their papers in peer groups.

Summary

This student should be encouraged to develop her own topics and style by writing for a variety of purposes and audiences and in a variety of forms. This student is ready to become an independent writer with an occasional teacher conference and to work with peers.

Form L

Part 1: Sample Student Response

Student Ray

sateridary i got up and i heared lighting so i went out to see what was going on and my brother ponged me in the face. then i ask my mom if i could listen to meusic and she yelled almost all day. and then i ask my mom if i could whatch t.v. and she sad yes but do not turn it up to loud and i sad o.k. then after i whatch tv. i ask my mom if i could go to Richards house and she sad yes you can Ray but How are you geting there arent you taking me down my car ase engate and im not chaning it now can make it to the gas stoshen but i do not halle any money i see a twenty dut

Part 1

Diagnosis/Comments	*Instructional Statements*
Task/Content	
This student understands the task and does attempt to provide the content required. The information lacks focus and emphasis and is not presented in a complete context. It seems the student did not finish the essay. The student has maintained a consistent point of view. While the information presented at the end may appear to be irrelevant, it is part of the explanation of getting a ride to the friend's house.	Ask the student to state orally the requirement of the task; this may help the student to focus more accurately on content. Have the student do more extensive prewriting by generating longer lists of possible content material. Have the student try to plan both a beginning and a conclusion even at this point in order to make the student aware the writing should have direction. To help clarify, focus, emphasize, etc., ask questions or guide the peer group in asking questions such as: What else went wrong? Is that important? How important is it compared with . . .?
Organization	
The writing lacks focus because there is no major unifying idea. Examples are given but are stated without explanation and emphasis. No connections are made between ideas or events.	For beginning writers, restating the task in statement form is one way of forming a unifying idea statement. Work with the student on organizing the prewriting ideas into topics and subtopics: problems at home, at school, at play, etc. Encourage the use of simple connectors: "then," "next," "at school," "finally," etc. Perhaps a chart listing many connecting words could be on view as a permanent display in the classroom.
Sentence Structure	
While there are many run-on sentences, this student does seem to have some awareness of what a sentence should be as evidenced by the use of the two large periods. Most "sentences" are of the same type and length.	Do not worry about sentence variety at this time. Work with the student on sentence formation, i.e., where each sentence should end. Have the student read aloud in a conference setting to help the student hear the sentences.
Language	
Most words are used correctly, but no specific language is used.	In conference, have the student read his writing. Support his attempts to explain the things that went wrong that day, and be careful to point out the correct formation and use of words. Try to suggest or have the student suggest alternative words that are more descriptive. Peers may also give the student some suggestions.
Mechanics/Usage	
There are many spelling, punctuation, and capitalization errors, but usage does not seem to be a problem. Some verbs are not formed correctly, especially in the past tense: "heared" "ask"(ed). The student seems to understand how the language works; the problems are in the mechanics.	Have the student keep a list of frequently used words that the student has misspelled: "listen," "watched," "getting." In conference, handle infrequently occurring words, such as "punch" and "station." The correct use of punctuation should come as a result of the discussion of sentence formation. Build on the student's ability to punctuate the first two "sentences." Remember also that punctuation is part of the final phase of the composing process.

Form L
Part 2: Sample Student Response

Student Rasy

I thing it would be scerry to be only 5 inches tall because I might get Stepped on and get hurt then I would not see my mom or Dad any more in till I get Better then I get to see my mom and DaD all I want to. If I was only 5 inches tall I would Be Scerred Because I would get Steppedon. then I Could Die. and if I was only 5 inches tall I would get sushed and get hurt. But when I get Better I can run around play game and do lots of stuf. But if I get Steppedon wants more I am going to get mad. But for now Im going to keep on playing For ever and ever good by see you some time or another good by agen see you nested year see you good bye

Part 2

Diagnosis/Comments	*Instructional Statements*
Task/Content	
The student's major problem with this task is the generation of content. The only response to the idea of being five inches tall is the fear of being stepped on. This response is repeated until irrelevant material is used at the end, probably to fill in what the student believes to be the required number of words. There is no attempt to use a complete series of ideas, explanations, or events.	Concentrate on developing content for this type of task. Prewriting discussions to clarify ideas and teacher-student conferences during the drafting stage are probably the best ways to develop more content. Ask questions such as: What other problems might you have? What would you do then? Where would you sleep? Are there any advantages to being five inches tall? Then show the student how to insert information and rewrite the draft. Also elicit the reasons for the irrelevant material at the end to see if the student realizes that it is irrelevant.
Organization	
The only specific unifying statement is the first; the writer goes nowhere from there, neither providing details nor making logical connections.	Since there must be content to organize, the suggestions made above must be the starting point. Have the student draw a sequence of events that could happen if he were five inches tall or write a series of "If . . . then" statements, cut them apart, and rearrange them before writing the first draft.
Sentence Structure	
The student has problems with sentence structure. The student uses run-on sentences and sentence fragments.	Have the student read the response aloud to a partner to see if the student can identify problems or errors. Use the student's own work for developing exercises in complete sentences, or for sentence-combining exercises.
Language	
The student does not demonstrate a command of vocabulary that enables him to use vivid, specific language. The student uses much unnecessary repetition.	All students develop more specific and vivid vocabulary from being read to, from playing word games, from writing poems. Have the student delete certain words or phrases from his paper and then fill in the blanks with more precise or colorful words. However, this type of remediation has to come after work has been done in improving content and organization.
Mechanics/Usage	
The student still spells phonetically. It is hard to tell whether the student has problems with capitalization because of the printing; however, the student's handwriting is easily read.	Just as corrections in spelling and mechanics come toward the end of the composing process, remediation in mechanics and usage should come after the other, more fundamental problems have been dealt with.

Summary

Analysis of both pieces of writing reveals some common, consistent problems, e.g., in sentence sense. The difference in the way the student handled content for both pieces is interesting. The student could present content for the task on Part 1 but apparently could not generate enough content for the task on Part 2. What does this indicate about the student's ability to imagine or create? Is the student more comfortable with real experiences, and, if so, how can that be capitalized on?

In addition to the extensive analysis of student responses for each part of Form L of the writing test, the following pages provide an example of what the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet might look like if filled in with diagnostic data based on the Part 1 response on page 32 and the Part 2 response on page 34, both written by the same student, Ray.

Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools
Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet

Name Ray Grade Date

School Teacher's Name

Star(*) Priority Item(s)	*Diagnosis/Comments* Part 1	Part 2	*Instructional Statements*
The student needs instruction in:			Biggest problem: generating info. and proper focus. More time on prewriting → more information. In conferences ask question to provide more content.
Task/Content			
a. Responding appropriately to the requirements of the task (audience, purpose, form, etc.)			
*b. Providing sufficient information to respond adequately to the task (ideas, explanations, examples, etc.)	✓	✓	After — work on (1) what is appropriate for this topic (2) what is more, most important.
*c. Selecting appropriate information for focus or emphasis	✓	✓	
d. Excluding irrelevant materi[illegible]		✓	
e. Maintaining a consistent point of view			Must have <u>content</u> first!
Organization			Build on the "successful" use of unifying idea statement of Part 2 to show what is needed for Part 1. Use columns to set order/relationships: /first/next/last. In conference help with logical connections.
a. Unifying the piece by means of appropriate generalization	✓		
b. Supporting generalization and conclusions by providing reasons, details, examples, etc.	✓	✓	
c. Making logical connections	✓	✓	

Star(*) Priority Item(s)	*Diagnosis/Comments* Part 1	Part 2	*Instructional Statements*
Sentence Structure			In conference ask him to point out "complete thoughts" which he thinks are sentences. Work with him on identifying sentence structure in his writing. Do this only during the editing phase.
a. Avoiding sentence fragments		✓	
b. Avoiding run-on sentences	✓	✓	
c. Using sentences of varied types and lengths	✓		
Language			Not important at this time.
a. Using specific, vivid words	✓	✓	
b. Forming words correctly			
c. Using words accurately			
d. Avoiding unnecessary repetition		✓	
Mechanics/Usage			Keep master spelling lists. Refer to the guides posted in the classroom for punctuation rules and capitalization rules. Only during editing and proofreading stage.
a. Developing spelling skills	✓	✓	
b. Using punctuation correctly	✓	✓	
c. Using capital letters correctly	✓		
d. Usage			
Subject/verb agreement			
Verb tenses			
Pronoun references			
Other: _____			
_____			
_____			
_____			
e. Improving handwriting			

SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES FOR ANALYSIS

The two pieces of writing which follow were written by the same student in response to Part 1 and Part 2 of Form L of the grade 5 writing test. They have not been analyzed and are included here for training purposes. It is suggested that, using the Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet, both pieces of writing be diagnosed for strengths and weaknesses, and that suggested teaching activities or approaches be filled in. A blank Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet has been included for this purpose.

Form L
Part 1: Sample Student Response

Student Joyce

Wen day I woke up and I well out of bed.
Then I hit my head into the wall. Then I
ran to the bath room I was Just about to
walkin some body ran right in. Then I herd
Somebody in the Kitchen I said who is in the
Kitchen no body ansewr then I went
in to the Kitchen it was the mag I Said
how did you get in She said I have a key
She was makeing pankcake. She dorp the mix
on my feet She did not evean Stay ~~Stor~~ Sorry.
That ater noon I went out to play ball with
My littel bother I went to the Stairs way door
my bother slamed the door on my hand. I went
down the stairs I went in to the park my littil bother.
My Mother Said when I go down Stairs buy some
bread I Said yes mom. my bother Soy his Freand and
Went with HiM! I ran up the Stairs and Jump into
bed. My mother went in to my bed room and
Said do not worry you weil have a good day.

Form L
Part 2: Sample Student Response

Student Joyce

IF I was five inches tall.
I will have a hard time.
I might get step on.
Some body might get tedh you to go
in to a Store at night and take someting.
You have a hard time eat because ever body will
be eating, everting they will not even see
you. Your littel Stier might Play with you
and use you for her doll. You might be runing a
Corss the Foor and Some body might step on you
or ~~and~~ a ant. You might be out Side and a
dog might try to eat you. Some body might
Put you in ther packet. They might go in to ther packet
and hurt you. You might Fall in to a pot hole ina
the ~~Steet~~ Street and a rat might eat you
qu.

Writing Test for New York State Elementary Schools
Student Writing Product Analysis Sheet

Name _____ **Grade** _____ **Date** _____

School _____ **Teacher's Name** _____

Star(*) Priority Item(s)	*Diagnosis/Comments* *Part 1*	*Part 2*	*Instructional Statements*
The student needs instruction in: **Task/Content** a. Responding appropriately to the requirements of the task (audience, purpose, form, etc.) b. Providing sufficient information to respond adequately to the task (ideas, explanations, examples, etc.) c. Selecting appropriate information for focus or emphasis d. Excluding irrelevant material e. Maintaining a consistent point of view			
Organization a. Unifying the piece by means of appropriate generalization b. Supporting generalization and conclusions by providing reasons, details, examples, etc. c. Making logical connections			

Star(*) Priority Item(s)	*Diagnosis/Comments* *Part 1*	*Part 2*	*Instructional Statements*
Sentence Structure			
a. Avoiding sentence fragments			
b. Avoiding run-on sentences			
c. Using sentences of varied types and lengths			
Language			
a. Using specific, vivid words			
b. Forming words correctly			
c. Using words accurately			
d. Avoiding unnecessary repetition			
Mechanics/Usage			
a. Developing spelling skills			
b. Using punctuation correctly			
c. Using capital letters correctly			
d. Usage Subject/verb agreement Verb tenses Pronoun references Other: _____ _____ _____ _____			
e. Improving handwriting			

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